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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [NATO](#) [LG](#)
SUBJECT: LATVIA TO STAY IN AFGHANISTAN, LEAVE BALKANS,
FOCUS ON NRF

Classified By: Charge d'affaires, a.i. Bruce Rogers. Reason: 1.4 (d)

¶1. (U) Latvia will maintain its commitment in Afghanistan, but eliminate its participation in KFOR and the EU mission in Bosnia at the end of the current rotations and use the savings to ensure it can meet its commitment to the Baltic Battalion in NRF-14 in 2010. The government took these decisions at a January 16 national security council meeting in light of the economic crisis and fiscal austerity in Latvia.

¶2. (C) The President and Prime Minister had earlier hoped that Latvia could remain in the Balkans, but the budgetary realities make that impossible. Focusing on Afghanistan, as NATO's highest priority mission, was the decision. MOD State Secretary Janis Sarts stressed in several discussions with us that the government had not factored in the 2009 costs, especially equipment purchases, to fulfill its 2010 obligations to the Baltic Battalion for NRF-14. Both because of the promises made to Latvia's neighbors and because the NRF could be called in for election security support in 2010 in Afghanistan, Sarts strenuously argued to cut the Balkans missions at the end of the current rotations. Sarts remains concerned that too much was taken from the defense budget and fears the resulting downgrade in professional and technical capabilities (ships and helicopters that are unusable because required maintenance cannot be performed), but felt it was better to address the funding problem in stages rather than all at once.
ROGERS